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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE MODERN WORLD. The sixth series of John Calvin McNair lectures at the University of North Carolina in 1913, expanded and revised. **FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY.** The Macmillan Co. 1914. Pp. 234. \$1.25.

The latest volume by Professor Peabody may be safely counted as perhaps his best. And by best I mean most timely, helpful, and suggestive. The author already has given us books of value and distinctive merit dealing with the approach to the social question, and the bearing of the teachings of Jesus on the social problem and on the Christian character. In this present volume, however, he considers a more practical, personal, and perplexing question. And that pressing and perplexing question is this: Can the modern man in the modern world remain a Christian? That is to say, can he be identified with its great events, participate in its multitudinous and materialistic movements, and still shape his life according to the Gospel teachings?

Professor Peabody puts the question very squarely. In his opening chapter on the practicability of the Christian life he inquires: "Amid the brutal competitions of modern industry, can trade be administered and profit be made in ways which are consistent with Christian discipleship? Amid the plottings of national politics and the collisions of international interests, can we fairly speak of a Christian civilization? . . . On what terms is it possible to live a Christian life in the modern world? Must not one take his choice between the two? Is the Christian religion a practicable faith among the inevitable conditions of modern efficiency and happiness; or is it the survival of an idealism which, however beautiful it may once have been, has become impracticable today?"

In answering these questions in the affirmative, and in pleading for the practicability of the Christian ideals when properly understood, Professor Peabody writes with his customary grace and familiar wealth of illustration and allusion. Indeed, he writes with such a balanced smoothness that one almost feels him to be superficial; while to read him is so easy and delightful that you wonder if you are not being gently led away from serious obstacles and insurmountable difficulties by a form of verbal witchery and rhetorical ingenuity. The author's point of view or method of approach is one with which his readers long have been familiar and which he has followed with consistency and skill. In the last of his incomparable addresses in the Harvard College Chapel he pleaded for what he called "the comprehensiveness of Christianity." In the course of that culminating talk to the students he reminded them of how a

distinguished American politician in a heated campaign telegraphed on one occasion to his friends, "Claim everything." And "that," he adds, "in a much profounder sense, is precisely the summons which Christianity makes on life."

Now of the expansiveness of Christianity there can be no doubt. It has almost "infinite flexibility," as our author well reminds us. "The Christian religion is much larger than many of its critics and some of its defenders have supposed. It assumes many forms, but is exhausted by none. Its fragmentary utterances may become impracticable guides, while its total view of life, its general law of conduct, may have permanent practicability. . . . Personality, character, spirituality, idealism, vision, communion with God, have in them a quality of timelessness, and are capable of expansion, transmission, and utilization in all the varied conditions of a changing world." Yet this process unquestionably can be carried much too far.

In spite of tendencies like these, however, too much emphasis can hardly be laid upon the value of Professor Peabody's service in freeing Christianity from what is merely temporary, occasional, and incidental, and in bringing forward the universal, spiritual, and permanent features of the Gospel. He claims very justly that "a fact may be distorted quite as easily by false perspective as by false definition. The truth of history, as of nature, is the proportion and relation of facts." In pursuance of this principle, we have in this volume a masterful separation of the transient from the permanent and the local from the universal in the Gospel teachings. Professor Peabody protests against the tendency to confuse oriental imagery with universal principles, while he points out that too great literalism distorts the record by mistaking the by-products of the teaching for the main contents.

There are many pungent passages in the book to which attention wisely may be called, as for instance this, in writing of the business world: "If business is not reformed, it is likely to be transformed. The alternative to a violent economic revolution is an accelerated, economic evolution. If capital is to escape confiscation, it must accept consecration. If the present industrial order does not serve, it must surrender." Of Jesus we are happily reminded that "his purpose was not revolution, but revelation. He was primarily concerned not with the distribution of goods, but with the inspiration of goodness. He was not a socialist, but a Saviour. His purpose was not to make rules, but to make men." Of the Gospels we are told that they form "not a text-book of mechanics, but a

source of power"; while "the New Testament is not a book of laws, but a book of life."

Opinion probably will differ as to the comparative value of the various chapters, which deal respectively with the Family, the Business World, the Making and Spending of Money, the Modern State, and the Christian Church. In some respects the last two, perhaps, as presenting wider issues, have the greatest interest and value. Writing before the present European war broke out, Professor Peabody pleads for a renaissance of national idealism, declaring with a conviction which since then has been terribly justified: "The whole creation of government travaileth in pain until now, waiting for the manifestation of the Christian State."

When he comes to consider, in his closing chapter, the Christian life and the Christian Church, his foot is on his native heath. He points with equal pertinence to the failure of Christian teachers to perceive the social bearing of the Christian message, and to the hesitancy of the Christian Church in fearlessly applying it; while those who repudiate the name are giving application to the message. "Here then," he writes, "is a curious situation. The methods and ideals which have been most characteristic of the Christian life are appropriated by many who refuse to accept the Christian name. Fraternity, social justice, co-operation, sacrifice, the bearing of others' burdens—the very words which are expressive of Christian discipleship are inscribed on the banners of new schemes and dreams; and organizations of philanthropy, co-operative industry, trades-unionism, and socialism, go sailing buoyantly down the river of the age, while the Christian Church looks on from the bank and sees its own insignia on those alien flags."

In closing this inadequate review of a most helpful, stimulating, and suggestive book, a word may, perhaps, be said of its dedicatory lines. Professor Peabody has prefaced nearly all of his recent books by sonnets or verses of a tender and touching character, addressed for the most part to members of his family. Such expressions of poetic feeling give evidence of more material of the kind which the world would rejoice to receive in collected form.

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